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## SUCCESS STORY

### USAID Supports Uzbekistan's Sunny Land Productions to Grow their Freeze-Dried Fruit Business



Photo caption: Nodirnazar Yakhyoev, Co-owner and Director of Sunny Land Products

*Uzbekistan's desirable climatic conditions allow local farmers to grow large volumes and a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, which are primarily exported in bulk with no or very low added value. To drive the growth of the private sector in agriculture, there is a need to introduce new value-added technologies to improve export potential. USAID's \$18.9 million Agribusiness Development Activity supports the growth of private companies in Uzbekistan's agriculture sector to increase the production of value-added products and improve export capabilities in order to enter more high-value markets. In June 2021, the activity established the Agribusiness Development Fund to strengthen the value-chain of agricultural products by increasing sales, creating new jobs, and accessing new markets. To date, USAID partnered with more than 22 Uzbek businesses to co-finance \$7.4 million in investments.*

Gone are the days of snacking on chips; an ever-increasing number of health-conscious consumers are looking for healthy snack options. Nodirnazar Yakhyoev manages the family-owned food processing company Sunny Land Products, located outside of the Uzbek capital, Tashkent which is meeting the needs of today's consumers by producing 40 varieties of freeze-dried fruit and vegetables, sourced locally from more than 100 Uzbek farmers.

"Freeze-dried snacks have been rapidly gaining popularity worldwide due to their absence of artificial preservatives and great taste! We used to export 90 percent of our products to the U.K., European Union, USA, Southeast Asia, and Middle East through local traders. We did not personally know or have any contact with the foreign buyers of our freeze-dried products," says Nodirnazar.

"In May 2022, USAID helped us to exhibit our range of products at Macfrut, an annual fruit and vegetable trade fair in Italy. At the fair, we met numerous European traders and buyers and learned that by directly selling our products to them, we could increase our profit margin by almost 40 percent. We also discovered that acquiring specific food safety certifications will allow us to access new lucrative markets and further boost sales and revenues," explained Nodirnazar.

To support Sunny Land Products in meeting food safety certification requirements, USAID provided the company with modern, quality control laboratory equipment. Sunny Land Products uses the equipment to test the quality of fresh fruit and vegetables delivered by farmers, as well as verify the quality of final, freeze-dried products prior to packaging for export.

"USAID also helped Sunny Land Products use funding from the Government of the United Kingdom to obtain kosher certification for the export of 11 varieties of freeze-dried fruit and vegetables to customers in Europe, the USA, and Israel. Thanks to USAID's support in securing trade linkages at Macfrut, providing quality control laboratory equipment and acquiring kosher certification, Sunny Land Products has already started exporting kosher-certified freeze-dried fruit and vegetables to the UK. In 2023, we exported more than 3,000 kilograms of freeze-dried products valued at \$84,000 to new customers in Turkey and UAE! 35% of these products were kosher certified and exported to the UK. These new trade linkages and increased sales revenues would not have been possible without the support of USAID," exclaims Nodirnazar.